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FOR PRESS ATTACHE

E.O. 12065: N/A

TAGS: MASS, PINS, IS, SA, US

SUBJECT: SAUDI F-15 ENHANCEMENT

REF: DIETER/CHICA TELCON

1. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ENTIRE TEXT

2. PER YOUR REQUEST, FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF APRIL 9 LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN BILL GREEN ON SAUDI F-15 ENHANCEMENT.

BEGIN TEXT:

DEAR MR. GREEN: I AM RESPONDING TO YOUR LETTER OF MARCH 9 TO SECRETARY HAIG CONCERNING THE PROPOSED SALE OF F-15 ENHANCEMENT ITEMS TO SAUDI ARABIA. AS YOU KNOW, ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS CONSULTED CLOSELY WITH CONGRESS ON THIS QUESTION. WE WILL CONTINUE IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE CONGRESS DURING THE UPCOMING PERIOD OF CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF THESE PROPOSED SALES.

DURING OUR CONSULTATIONS WE DISCUSSED THE UNDERTAKING OF THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION THAT CERTAIN ENHANCEMENT ITEMS WOULD NOT BE SOLD TO SAUDI ARABIA. SINCE 1978, HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN PROFOUND CHANGES IN THE REGIONAL SITUATION THAT AFFECT OUR VITAL INTEREST AND WHICH WE BELIEVE REQUIRE A FRESH APPROACH. AMONG SUCH DEVELOPMENTS WERE THE FALL OF THE SHAH, THE USE OF AIR POWER TO DESTROY VITAL PETROLEUM FACILITIES IN THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR AND THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN. IN THIS WORSENED REGIONAL SITUATION, SAUDI ARABIA DESIRES TO PLAN PRUDENTLY AGAINST THE WORST POSSIBLE CONTINGENCY. THE ITEMS WE PROPOSE TO SELL TO SAUDI ARABIA WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE SAUDI CAPABILITIES TO DEFEND ITS INHERENTLY IMPORTANT OIL FACILITIES. WE HAVE THEREFORE ASKED CONGRESS TO CONSIDER WITH US WHETHER THE 1978 ASSURANCES CONTINUE TO SERVE OUR INTERESTS, GIVEN THE PRESENT STRATEGIC SITUATION IN THE AREA.

THE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP IS CHARACTERIZED BY A CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS IN MANY AREAS. IT IS A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO BOTH STATES. THE SAUDIS MAINTAIN THAT A NUMBER OF THEIR POLICIES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY SUPPORTED U.S. INTERESTS: MAINTAINING OIL PRODUCTION HIGHER THAN PREFERRED LEVELS (FOR EXAMPLE, THE DECISION TO INCREASE PRODUCTION TO 10 MILLION BARRELS PER DAY TO OFFSET SHORTAGES RESULTING FROM THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR); PRICING OF SAUDI CRUDE OIL WELL BELOW THE GENERAL OPEC LEVEL; DEVOTING A HIGH PERCENTAGE (ALMOST 10%) OF THEIR GNP TO FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WHICH IN MANY CASES COMPLEMENTS U.S. EFFORTS TO SUPPORT MODERATE REGIMES; AND TAKING THE LEAD IN ORGANIZING REGIONAL OPPOSITION TO THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN.

THE SALE OF F-15 ENHANCEMENT ITEMS GOES BEYOND THE SAUDI-U.S. BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. IT IS [illegible] IMPORTANT THAT OUR FRIENDS AND ADVERSARIES [illegible] CLEARLY THAT THE UNITED STATES IS READY TO WORK WITH ITS FRIENDS IN THE AREA TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL SECURITY. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN SOUTHWEST ASIA AND THE PERSIAN GULF REGION AT A TIME WHEN THE SOVIET UNION HAS SUCCEEDED IN ENTRENCHING ITSELF IN THE REGION'S PERIPHERY IN SUCH PLACES AS AFGHANISTAN, SOUTH YEMEN AND ETHIOPIA.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT SAUDI ACQUISITION OF THESE SYSTEMS IS OF GREAT CONCERN TO ISRAEL. AS YOU KNOW, A CENTRAL FEATURE OF U.S. POLICY SINCE THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR HAS BEEN TO ASSURE FULLY THAT ISRAEL RETAINS QUALITATIVE MILITARY SUPERIORITY. ISRAEL PRESENTLY HAS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM, MANNED BY WELL-TRAINED PERSONNEL, INCLUDING SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT SUCH AS THE F-15 AND F-16 AS WELL AS DEFENSIVE MISSILE AND GUN SYSTEMS. MOREOVER, THE SAUDIS HAVE DECIDED TO ESTABLISH THE MAIN OPERATING BASES FOR THEIR F-15S IN THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AREAS OF THE COUNTRY AND IT WOULD TAKE A CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO UPGRADE BASES CLOSER TO ISRAEL TO THE LEVEL OF MAIN OPERATING BASES. THIS ADMINISTRATION WILL ASSURE THAT ISRAEL'S DEFENSES REMAIN STRONG UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. ACCORDINGLY, WE ARE PLANNING TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL TO PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH ADDITIONAL CREDITS OF $300 MILLION EACH IN FISCAL YEARS 1983 AND 84 FOR A TOTAL OF $600 MILLION. THESE CREDITS WILL ENABLE ISRAEL TO PURCHASE AIR DEFENSE AIRCRAFT OR OTHER EQUIPMENT THAT THEY HAVE DEFERRED BECAUSE OF THEIR DIFFICULT FINANCIAL POSITION. THESE CREDITS WOULD BE IN ADDITION TO OUR EXTENSIVE AND ONGOING FOREIGN MILITARY SALES CREDITS TO ISRAEL FOR THE PURCHASE OF SOPHISTICATED U.S. WEAPONS SYSTEMS. IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT ISRAEL WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ITS MARGIN OF MILITARY SUPERIORITY OVER THE ARAB STATES AND WILL REMAIN CAPABLE OF DEFEATING ANY COMBINATION OF ARAB FORCES.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA HAS ASSURED US THAT IT WILL USE U.S.-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT ONLY FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES. WHILE WE CANNOT TOTALLY FORECLOSE THE POSSIBLE USE OF U.S. EQUIPMENT BY SAUDI ARABIA AGAINST ISRAEL, WE BELIEVE THE RISK IS SMALL.

CONCERNING ANOTHER POINT YOU RAISED, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS NOT PRESSURING OUR ALLIES TO SELL ARMS TO SAUDI ARABIA, ALTHOUGH WE ARE AWARE THAT SAUDI OFFICIALS HAVE HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH EUROPEAN OFFICIALS ABOUT POSSIBLE ARMS PURCHASES. THE UNITED STATES RECOGNIZES THAT OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN STRENGTHENING SAUDI SECURITY.

I APPRECIATE THE CONCERNS YOU HAVE RAISED. WE HAVE GIVEN THE MOST CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO ALL ASPECTS

OF THE ISSUES IN MAKING OUR DECISION. IT REMAINS OUR BEST JUDGMENT THAT U.S. INTERESTS ARE BEST SERVED BY GOING FORWARD ON THIS SALE.

SINCERELY, ALVIN PAUL DRISCHLER, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS.

END TEXT

HAIG